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# Republican Policy Committee

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## Bingaman Amendment to Treasury/Postal Appropriations Would Weaken U.S. Policy Toward Castro

When the Senate takes up consideration of the Treasury/Postal Appropriations bill (H.R. 2020), Senator Bingaman is expected to offer an amendment to prevent the President from using funds to enforce longstanding travel restrictions to Cuba. According to Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Helms, the Bingaman amendment would be harmful to American interests for several reasons:

- **The Amendment would weaken substantially the current U.S. economic embargo of the Castro regime.**
  - **The Amendment would provide new and desperately needed hard currency to the Castro regime — but it will not hurt Castro or his cronies.** American currency exchanged at Cuban resorts goes directly into the hands of Fidel Castro, not the citizens of Cuba. Castro's financial difficulties are becoming critical: his government is now imposing a 100-percent tariff on all new articles brought into Cuba with a value between \$100 and \$1,000. There is also a tariff if someone brings in more than 42 pounds of luggage.
  - **The Amendment will *not* benefit the Cuban people, who are banned from tourist facilities on the island or from mingling with foreign tourists.** Contrary to belief, tourism has not helped improve the lives or freedoms of the Cuban people. Tourists have access to food, shelter, and recreation not available to the Cuban people. Cubans are denied access to tourist facilities, which are often isolated from population centers. This system has been called "tourist apartheid."
  - **The Amendment would erode a proven and useful tool of U.S. foreign policy to bring democratic change to Cuba.** By eroding the potential effectiveness of sanctions, the Amendment would drastically reduce U.S. options for peacefully responding to human rights violations and acts of aggression.

- **The Amendment ignores the fact that current regulations allow for travel for official, humanitarian, journalistic, educational, and religious activities.** The Clinton Administration has the authority to alter U.S. travel policy towards Cuba at any time. U.S. travel restrictions should be improved, not scrapped. Under current regulations, only criminal penalties can be imposed for violations. The Administration has testified before Congress that it favors the enactment of civil penalties as the best means of enforcing existing restrictions. This recommendation has been incorporated in the Helms-Dole bill, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, S. 381.
- **The Amendment defies Supreme Court decisions that the Executive Branch can restrict travel to Cuba for national security reasons.** The existing travel restrictions do not violate the U.S. Constitution. The Supreme Court twice has upheld the Executive Branch regulations, holding that the right to international travel is not without limitations when the restrictions are connected with our national security interests. It is in our national interest to deny hard currency to Castro. In addition, the Amendment would eliminate the Treasury Department's power to approve current transactions, travel, and currency transfers. As a result, this could provide cover for illegal financial and trade transactions.

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